

Title	Perspectives in Language : An Analysis of English Magazine Articles
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Citation	大阪大学言語文化学. 6 p.77-p.90
Issue Date	1997-03-31
oaire:version	VoR
URL	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/11094/78093">https://hdl.handle.net/11094/78093</a>
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## Perspectives in Language

— An Analysis of English Magazine Articles — \*

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本研究は、言語表現としては直接表わされていない書き手のパースペクティヴが、読み手によって解釈される、その過程の明確化を試みたものである。ここでは、ディスコースにおいて相手との関係に関する話者の意図や感情などを表わす Bateson(1972:178)の“metacommunicative level”に属する隠れたパースペクティヴが、読み手によってどのように理解されるのかについて、隠喩的概念とスキーマという2つの観点に注目して考察を行った。

Time、Newsweek、Far East Economic Reviewの3誌の日本社会についての記事を対象として分析を行った結果、隠喩的概念とスキーマがそれぞれ、“metacommunicative level”のパースペクティヴの解釈において以下のように機能していることが明らかになった。

隠喩的概念は2つの事象を比較することにより、それぞれの事象に対して読み手の持つ文化的または社会的背景に基づくスキーマを喚起する。さらに、喚起されたスキーマにより、読み手は、その隠喩的概念を用いて書き手が意図したパースペクティヴを解釈するのである。また、時には、読み手は、ある言語表現を用いて喚起されたスキーマのみによっても、書き手が間接的に表わしたパースペクティヴの解釈を行うこともあることが確認された。

本研究は、読み手と書き手による積極的な相互作用を認めるとともに、コミュニケーション行為としてのリーディングの意義およびその深さをも提示している。

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\* 言語に潜むパースペクティヴ—英語雑誌記事の分析を通して—(高木佐知子)

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## 1. Introduction

Perspectives are our mental views. Though they are not so strongly stated as ideologies which tend to guide people's social movements, perspectives are also our opinions. This paper focuses on perspectives as personal opinions and thoughts on events in our everyday life.

Perspectives are shown in many ways in communication. We directly tell them to others, or we just imply them by talking about something else. In either case, we can generally understand expressed perspectives by means of their linguistic and nonlinguistic information. This is due to the different levels of our communication explained by Bateson (1972), which are "denotative level," "metalinguistic level" and "metacommunicative level."<sup>1)</sup> Messages of "denotative level" and "metalinguistic level" are rather direct and literal expressions, and the receiver of such a message can easily understand what the sender means. On the other hand, literal interpretation is not enough for a message of "meta-communicative level" ("a metacommunicative message" henceforth) and the receiver tries to understand the sender's intention or feelings with the help of linguistic or nonlinguistic clues, or "contextualization cues" (Gumperz 1982 ).<sup>2)</sup>

This paper focuses on the third level. The first two levels of messages are transferred rather easily to a person who shares linguistic knowledge like lexical and syntactic knowledge with the sender, while interpretation of meta-communicative messages requires contextualization cues working with specific

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<sup>1)</sup> "Denotative level" describes the fact such as "The cat is on the mat," "metalinguistic level" conveys a message of a discourse whose subject is the language itself such as "The word 'cat' has no fur and cannot scratch," and "metacommunicative level" refers to the relationship of the conversationalists as the subject of the discourse such as "My telling you where to find the cat was friendly." Thus communication of metacommunicative level shows the participant's feelings or intention toward the other ( Bateson 1972: 178).

<sup>2)</sup> Contextualization cues by Gumperz are "features of linguistic forms that contribute to the signaling of contextual presuppositions," and they include "code, dialect and style switching processes, some of the prosodic phenomena ... as well as choice among lexical and syntactic options, formulaic expressions, conversational openings, closing and sequencing strategies." In addition, Gumperz mentions that interpretation of such cues is influenced by cultural and social factors (Gumperz 1982: 131-132).

contextual information such as situation, culture, and social identity of the sender. Therefore, it is considered interesting and meaningful to examine how a writer's perspective as a metacommunicative message is conveyed and how complicated the process is.

## **2. Purpose of the study and its data**

This study aims to clarify our interpretation of perspectives as metacommunicative messages in written discourse. By doing this, I believe, one of the mechanisms of our act of reading will become obvious.

Non-literal meaning in conversation has been extensively studied, and the importance of "oral communication" is emphasized in English education in Japan. However, when it comes to reading, interaction between the writer and the reader in written discourse has not been given so much attention (Oumi 1996). Oumi emphasizes the importance of reading as an act of communication, stating that hidden information behind words such as the writer's intention and a multiplicity of meaning created by the writer should be understood during the process of reading (Oumi 1996: 49). Since the present study examines how perspectives are understood with the help of hidden contextual information, it investigates the process of reading as an act of communication.

For the purpose mentioned above, this study analyzes journalistic magazine articles written in English. Much attention is paid to the style of journalistic articles so that readers may find them less offensive or less excessive, and the personality of the writers are not emphasized (Toyama 1961). Therefore, journalistic articles, except the ones which are written mainly for some political or ideological groups to emphasize their belief, are considered to express perspectives by weaving them into the stream of discourse, and to let the readers grasp what the writer wants to say. Thus journalistic articles are suitable for the present study on perspectives in language since their readers usually have to comprehend apparently impersonal and implicit meaning as well as the literal meaning of the article.

This study is a qualitative analysis of perspectives in recent articles on

Japanese society appearing in *Newsweek*, *Time* and *Far East Economic Review*. The reason for choosing these magazines is that since the readers are general public and the articles are less offensive or less excessive, they are considered to be suitable materials for examining the writers' perspectives with the help of hidden contextual information. Besides, by using articles on Japanese society, it is possible to examine how background knowledge about Japan works effectively in understanding written discourse in English.

### 3. Methodology

It is possible to grasp the writer's perspectives in a journalistic article if we study its lexical and syntactic elements together with some nonlinguistic knowledge. For instance, Lee (1992) analyzes perspectives in newspaper articles by examining their linguistic information together with their readers' common sense. The present study focuses on the metaphorical concepts and schemata which are considered to connect linguistic information with the reader's personal or general knowledge like Lee's common sense.

#### 3.1 Metaphorical concepts

Metaphor is defined in a dictionary as "the application of a word or phrase to an object or concept it does not literally denote in order to suggest comparison, as in 'A mighty fortress is our God'."<sup>3)</sup> The present study adopts this concept of metaphor without restricting its form to "A is B," and such an extended notion of metaphor is the same as the one presented as "metaphorical concept" in Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 6). The essence of their metaphorical concept is "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." In communication, interpretation of metaphorical concepts is considered to help the receiver understand metacommunicative messages transferred by the sender and grasp the sender's intention or feelings.

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<sup>3)</sup> This definition is cited from *The Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (1993) Random House, Inc.

### 3.2 Schemata

If the writer's perspectives are highlighted with direct and emphatic messages, the reader has little difficulty understanding what the writer aims to convey. However, when the writer avoids direct claim or criticism in consideration to the journalistic neutrality, he/she has to resort to more indirect ways of conveying messages. One of the ways is by means of metaphorical concepts as mentioned above. Another way is to let the reader understand the messages by having him/her infer the meaning of the writer in association with his/her stored background knowledge.

Stored knowledge which is activated in interpretation like this is called a schema, whose concept originally derives from psychology. A schema is defined as "our prior knowledge and experience" which is "packaged" into an infinite number of both general and specific units" and its function is "to provide frameworks for interpreting the world, including, in reading, the world of the text" (Davis 1995: 66). Kitao (1989) refers to three types of this concept, which are a content schema, a textual schema and an event schema. A content schema "contains general or specific information on a given topic," and a textual schema "contains information about how rhetoric is, or ought to be, organized." An event schema which is sometimes referred as a script "contains information about stereotypical events or situations such as eating in a restaurant," and it is "organized temporally."

A content schema which is associated with our background knowledge is often referred to as a schema in general.<sup>4)</sup> This kind of schema provides a

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<sup>4)</sup> For example, Itoh (1989: 70) explains this concept by using our general knowledge about a face, while Tannen and Wallat (1993: 61) interpret a friend's utterance by the associated specific knowledge. Itoh explains that if we read a sentence describing a beautiful woman like "her eyes are blue and her mouth is big..," we usually utilize our general knowledge about a face. Such a general knowledge about a face is "a schema about a face." (Itoh 1989: 70)

Though deriving from the same concept, Tannen and Wallat's "knowledge schema," which is their term for "schema" in the present paper, includes more social elements such as a person's culture, social identity and customs in private life. Their definition of knowledge schema is "participants' expectation about people, objects, events and settings in the world, as distinguished from alignments being negotiated in a particular interaction" and they emphasize that "the only way anyone can understand any discourse is by filling in unstated information which is known from prior experience in the world (Tannen and Wallat 1993: 61).

certain expression which is working as a contextualization cue with contextual information including cultural or social factors, and helps the reader's interpretation.

The next chapter analyzes actual written discourse in the light of metaphorical concepts and content schemata in order to clarify the interpretation of perspectives.

## 4. Analysis

Here, indirectly presented perspectives about Japanese society are examined from two viewpoints, that is, metaphorical concepts based on schemata and schemata only.

### 4.1 Perspectives examined through metaphorical concepts based on schemata

Metaphorical concepts in the data have been found to depend on the writer's and reader's socially or culturally specific background knowledge, that is, schemata, for it is difficult to associate one object with the other without having the relevant knowledge about both of them. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state that no metaphor can be comprehended without its "experiential basis," and their "experiential basis" can be understood as schema in this case. This paper tries to clarify this point by analyzing actual discourse.

In the first example, a metaphor of sumo is used to describe Japanese political conflicts.

- (1) And nearly all battles were waged with painstaking discretion, behind stone-walled residences or the sliding doors of private restaurant rooms, far from the brilliant spotlights that make sumo such a compelling spectacle of sweating, straining girth against girth. (Time January 15, 1996)

(Each underlined part refers to a writer's consistent perspective.)

Prior to this passage, the writer of this article states that many metaphors of sumo used in the context of political struggles have never been adequate. This passage is the reason for that.

The expression of "battles were waged" is originally used for sumo, but in this discourse, with the following phrase "with painstaking discretion," it implies traditional political struggles in Japan. Then, two kinds of stages for battles are contrasted as "behind stone-walled residences or the sliding doors of private restaurant rooms," and "the brilliant spotlights that make sumo such a compelling spectacle of sweating, straining girth against girth." By comparing Japanese political conflicts to sumo which is a Japanese traditional sport, the writer indirectly emphasizes the exclusiveness and secretiveness of Japanese political struggles, and presents his perspective about the undemocratic custom of Japanese politics.

When a reader recognizes the metaphor of sumo, his/her culturally oriented background knowledge about sumo is activated. It includes great strength, thrilling spectacle, fairness and openness without any walls but with only a dividing line on the sumo ring. Unless such a content schema is activated, the reader can not understand the value of the metaphorical concept nor the meaning in the contrast of two kinds of situations which expresses the author's perspective on Japanese closed and opaque politics. Thus the metaphor of sumo, which is based on the reader's culturally oriented schema, enables him/her to grasp the metacommunicative message of the writer. The message here is the writer's critical perspective about Japanese politics.

Davis (1995) says what influences prediction of the content is "cultural knowledge and readers' knowledge of the world, or content knowledge." In this example (1), the writer, by visually describing the fairness and openness of sumo, expects the reader who has cultural knowledge about Japan and knowledge of the world of politics to visualize the battling scene of two sumo wrestlers and to compare it to Japanese political struggles. Thus this article is aimed at a reader who has both cultural and content knowledge about Japan to some extent. Many readers of *Time* as well as other two magazines which are



widely read in the world should have some specific cultural and world knowledge, so the metaphor in (1) is considered to be properly interpreted. Of course, there may be a case in which the sumo metaphor is not comprehended by some readers; however, this paper's aim of clarifying how a writer's perspective is conveyed has been achieved because the analyst's (that is, my) cultural knowledge about Japan in interpreting a Japanese article makes her one of the readers intended by the writer to properly receive his metacommunicative message.

The next example shows that a metaphor about war criticizes Japanese mass media's attitude.

- (2) Most crucially, the ratings war has intensified in a battle to attract advertising revenues. At some Wide Shows, producers sit in front of a bank of TV screens showing rival channels, deciding to switch from one topic to the next, or go into a commercial break, depending on what the competition is showing. Viewer ratings are now available on a minute-by-minute basis so editors can analyze the effects of their decisions on audience size.

(Far Eastern Economic Review April 25, 1996)

This article itself is about a TBS incident which is blamed for causing the murder of a lawyer and his family by a Japanese cult. As one of the reasons for mass media's lessened ethics, the article describes the severe competition in acquiring TV viewers' ratings. In the passage above, a metaphor of war is effectively utilized, which is shown by such words as "the ratings war . . . in a battle to attract an advertising revenues," and producers sitting "in front of a bank of TV screens" play the role of commanders in a battle. By drawing on our schema about war, which is fearful, severe and inhumane, not only for Japanese, but also for people all over the world, we can understand the severity of ratings competition in TV stations, and can interpret the writer's perspective, that is, his surprise at and criticism of Japanese media's attitude. This metaphor on war is similar to Lakoff and Johnson (1980)'s example,

"Argument is war." However, the cited example above shows more clearly that our schema about war makes the implicature of the metaphor salient and understandable.

As observed in the two examples above, schemata play a crucial role in interpreting perspectives which are indirectly structured by metaphors. Though Lee (1992) does not use the word schemata in his analysis of writers' perspectives and ideologies, he regards "addressee's knowledge base" as an indispensable substance working with "a catalyst" — language or an expression of metaphor in this case — and he emphasizes the importance of this substance. (Lee 1992: 81) Since his "addressee's knowledge base" is considered to mean the addressee's schemata, the importance of his concept has been confirmed in this study.

## 4.2 Perspectives examined through schemata

Perspectives have also been comprehended directly in terms of the reader's schemata.

The following example describes some Japanese people's attitude towards artistic works.

- (3) Art investors bankrupted by real-estate and stock-market crashes have been forced to give up their collections. Few owners, in truth, seem heartbroken about it. That's because Japan's megapurchasers were typically motivated less by a love of art than by elaborate investment scams. In 1990, for instance, executives of the now defunct Itoman trading company . . .

(Newsweek April 15, 1996)

Here the underlined part expresses the writer's critical view of many Japanese who purchase artistic works not because of any affection for the objects, but as an investment of funds. By using the word "love," the writer presents a general presupposition that artistic works should be cherished and

treasured and should not be made the victim of investment. Such a presupposition is part of our schema about art which is included in common sense shared in many cultures. This schema being activated in this passage, the reader can interpret the writer's perspective, which is his amazement at the attitude of Japanese art investors who hardly cherish their purchased masterpieces.

The next example shows contrast of two schemata, that is, the schema of a modern and independent Japanese woman with that of a very old-fashioned and powerless Japanese woman.

- (4) Masako Owada began to disappear on June 9, 1993, the day of her wedding. Before that, she had been a star in her own right: a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard, a world traveler who spoke five languages, an up-and-comer in the Japanese Foreign Ministry. But on her wedding day, Masako's jet-black hair was anointed with camellia oil, smeared with wax and molded into a traditional bun. Her 14-kilogram dress was perfectly modeled on those of the 10th-century Heian dynasty. Pattering on little cat's feet behind the groom, she performed sacred rites within the shrine of the sun goddess, the holiest sanctuary of the Imperial Palace — and thus became crown princess and the future empress of Japan. She's hardly been heard from since. (Newsweek June 3, 1996)

The passage above follows the subheading which points out Crown Princess Masako may have lost her identity after the marriage, although she was once expected as a possible revolutionary force in the old-fashioned Imperial Household.

The first underlined part, "a star in her own right: a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard, a world traveler who spoke five languages, an up-and-comer in the Japanese Foreign Ministry" explains her personal achievement, ability and career: by the word "a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard", the writer emphasizes her absolute cleverness, and in addition to her surprising

ability in the command of five languages which for ordinary Japanese would be almost impossible to obtain, the writer describes her as a promising diplomat. Since it is widely known in Japan that an examination for becoming a diplomat is one of the hardest, the expression “an up-and-comer in the Japanese Foreign Ministry” describes her as an outstanding career woman. Thus, drawing on our schemata of the modern society, the first underlined part emphasizes Masako’s extraordinary talent and intelligence.

The second underlined passage is about Masako’s wedding. Here, very old-fashioned Japanese items are depicted, such as camellia oil, traditional bun, 14-kilogram dress modeled on that of the 10th-century Heian dynasty. Masako on that day was no longer a super-intelligent, cosmopolitan nor a promising diplomat. On the contrary, she was less modern than most of today’s ordinary Japanese women since she was “pattering on little cat’s feet behind the groom” having followed super-traditional Royal wedding form.

Things like camellia oil, traditional bun, and to follow her husband “on little cat’s feet” activate our schemata and make us wonder at the unchanged conservativeness of the Imperial Household despite the rapid changes in the Japanese modern society. These old-fashioned items exaggeratedly representing Japanese ancient culture make a sharp contrast with Masako’s modernity, and the writer’s disappointment at the disappearance of modern, independent Masako is understood.

The two examples above do not conceptualize a thing by utilizing the other’s concept as metaphors do, but they just describe facts which activate the reader’s schemata. Such a way of drawing on the reader’s schemata has been found effective in presenting the writer’s perspectives with journalistic neutrality maintained, as far as the schemata are correctly activated.

## 5. Concluding remarks

This study has sought to clarify our understanding of perspectives in written discourse. While some perspectives have literal meanings conveyed by the linguistic information appearing on the surface, others are expressed as

metacommunicative messages which require contextual information to help the reader's interpretation. This paper has analyzed perspectives of the latter type, focusing on metaphorical concepts and schemata.

It has become obvious that metaphorical concepts indirectly structure the writer's perspectives and activate the reader's culturally and/or socially oriented schemata. Then, these schemata have been found to work effectively in order to materialize metaphorical concepts in the mind of the reader and to help him/her understand the role the metaphors play in the expressions. Moreover, the reader's activated schemata sometimes directly let him/her interpret the writer's implicit perspective.

This study has clarified the role of metaphorical concepts in the interpretation of metacommunicative messages by analyzing actual discourse, not unconnected sentences created by a researcher. Moreover, it has confirmed the importance of schemata both in relation to metaphorical concepts and in the role schemata principally play.

Perspectives as metacommunicative messages are not unconnected with interpretation of denotative or metalinguistic level. In fact, it is natural that these two levels of interpretation should readily occur to a reader when he/she is reading. However, if the writer intends to convey a message of metacommunicative level, which is understood by the reader with the help of contextualization cues, the reader also should deepen interpretation to the same level. Thus understanding of metacommunicative messages, which are originally based on denotative or metalinguistic level of interpretation, requires the reader's appropriate reaction to the writer.

Lee (1992) says utterances interact with a particular set of conceptual structures to produce meaning (bold in the original), and in fact, such an interaction is not limited to spoken discourse. Through the analysis of perspectives, we have observed the active interaction between the writer and the reader, in which the reader reads the writer's mind, not just the written words. This process in our mind has clearly shown one of the aspects of reading as an act of communication.

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